

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:
2 presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;
3 presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not
4 expired;
5 deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to at
6 least one randomly-selected expiration parameter; and
7 repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and
8 deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of
9 the active display segments have been deactivated.

- 1 2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter
2 comprises an expiration count.

- 1 3. The method of Claim 2, wherein the randomly-selected expiration count
2 comprises a plurality of expiration counts, and wherein deactivating the active display
3 segments comprises deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to
4 one of the plurality of expiration counts.

- 1 4. The method of Claim 3, wherein the plurality of expiration counts comprises a
2 unique expiration count for each of the active display segments, and wherein deactivating the
3 active display segments comprises deactivating the active display segments that have expired
4 in response to their corresponding one of the unique expiration counts.

- 1 5. The method of Claim 2, wherein a quantity of the expiration count is at least
2 partly influenced by a wager input.

- 1 6. The method of Claim 2, further comprising randomly selecting award amounts
2 from a table of alternative award amounts.

1 7. The method of Claim 6, wherein randomly selecting award amounts comprises
2 selecting a number of award amounts corresponding to the expiration count.

1 8. The method of Claim 1, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter
2 comprises an expiration time duration.

1 9. The method of Claim 8, wherein a quantity of the expiration time duration is
2 at least partly influenced by a wager input.

1 10. The method of Claim 1, further comprising revealing the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter to the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active
3 display segments.

1 11. The method of Claim 1, further comprising concealing the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter from the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active
3 display segments.

1 12. The method of Claim 1, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one
2 expiration parameter by randomly selecting the expiration parameter from a table of
3 alternative expiration parameters.

1 13. The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter
2 comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters with replacement.

1 14. The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter
2 comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters without replacement.

1 15. The method of Claim 12, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter
2 comprises randomly selecting the expiration parameter from separate tables of alternative
3 expiration parameters for each of the active display segments.

1 16. The method of Claim 1, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one
2 expiration parameter using an equal probability distribution for each alternative expiration
3 parameter option.

1 17. The method of Claim 1, further comprising randomly selecting the at least one
2 expiration parameter using a weighted probability distribution for each alternative expiration
3 parameter option.

1 18. The method of Claim 1, further comprising identifying the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols in the active display segments.

1 19. The method of Claim 18, wherein identifying the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises facilitating participant
3 selection of the randomly-selected expiration parameter.

1 20. The method of Claim 19, further comprising facilitating participant
2 association between particular active display segments and a corresponding randomly-
3 selected expiration parameter.

1 21. The method of Claim 18, wherein identifying the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises automatically selecting the
3 randomly-selected expiration parameter without participant intervention.

1 22. The method of Claim 21, further comprising individually associating a
2 plurality of randomly-selected expiration parameters with a plurality of the active display
3 segments.

1 23. The method of Claim 21, further comprising associating one randomly-
2 selected expiration parameter with a plurality of the active display segments.

1 24. The method of Claim 1, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter
2 is a randomly-selected expiration decision performed each time that the symbols are to be
3 presented in each of the active display segments.

1 25. The method of Claim 1, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter
2 comprises an expiration count and an expiration time duration.

1 26. The method of Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the
2 active display segments and deactivating the active display segments that have expired until a
3 predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated comprises
4 repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments and deactivating the
5 active display segments that have expired until all of the active display segments have been
6 deactivated.

1 27. A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:
2 presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;
3 presenting symbols in each of the active display segments that have not
4 expired;
5 deactivating the active display segments that have expired in response to each
6 of the active display segments' presentation of symbols a number of times corresponding to a
7 respective expiration count value; and
8 repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and
9 deactivating the active display segments that have expired, until all of the active display
10 segments have been deactivated.

1 28. A casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least a standard
2 mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:
3 a video screen to present a display grid having a plurality of display cells;
4 a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode
5 of operation; and

6 a processor configured to designate a plurality of the display cells as active
7 display cells in response to a predetermined symbol combination occurring during the
8 standard mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present
9 symbols in the active display cells, deactivate the active display cells that presented symbols
10 a number of times corresponding to a randomly-selected expiration count, and to repeat the
11 random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the display cells that reached the
12 randomly-selected expiration count until all of the active display cells have been deactivated.

1 29. A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:
2 presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel
3 segments;
4 presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments that have not expired;
5 deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to at least
6 one randomly-selected expiration parameter; and
7 repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and
8 deactivating the active reel segments that have expired, until a predetermined number of the
9 active reel segments have been deactivated.

1 30. The method of Claim 29, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter
2 comprises an expiration count.

1 31. The method of Claim 30, wherein the randomly-selected expiration count
2 comprises a plurality of expiration counts, and wherein deactivating the active reel segments
3 comprises deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in response to one of the
4 plurality of expiration counts.

1 32. The method of Claim 31, wherein the plurality of expiration counts comprises
2 a unique expiration count for each of the active reel segments, and wherein deactivating the
3 active reel segments comprises deactivating the active reel segments that have expired in
4 response to their corresponding one of the unique expiration counts.

1 33. The method of Claim 30, wherein a quantity of the expiration count is at least
2 partly influenced by a wager input.

1 34. The method of Claim 30, further comprising randomly selecting award
2 amounts from a table of alternative award amounts.

1 35. The method of Claim 34, wherein randomly selecting award amounts
2 comprises selecting a number of award amounts corresponding to the expiration count.

1 36. The method of Claim 29, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter
2 comprises an expiration time duration.

1 37. The method of Claim 36, wherein a quantity of the expiration time duration is
2 at least partly influenced by a wager input.

1 38. The method of Claim 20, further comprising revealing the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter to the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active
3 reel segments.

1 39. The method of Claim 29, further comprising concealing the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter from the participant prior to presenting the symbols in each of the active
3 reel segments.

1 40. The method of Claim 29, further comprising randomly selecting the at least
2 one expiration parameter by randomly selecting the expiration parameter from a table of
3 alternative expiration parameters.

1 41. The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter
2 comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters with replacement.

1 42. The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter
2 comprises randomly selecting a plurality of expiration parameters without replacement.

1 43. The method of Claim 40, wherein randomly selecting the expiration parameter
2 comprises randomly selecting the expiration parameter from separate tables of alternative
3 expiration parameters for each of the active reel segments.

1 44. The method of Claim 29, further comprising randomly selecting the at least
2 one expiration parameter using an equal probability distribution for each alternative
3 expiration parameter option.

1 45. The method of Claim 29, further comprising randomly selecting the at least
2 one expiration parameter using a weighted probability distribution for each alternative
3 expiration parameter option.

1 46. The method of Claim 29, further comprising identifying the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols in the active reel segments.

1 47. The method of Claim 46, wherein identifying the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises facilitating participant
3 selection of the randomly-selected expiration parameter.

1 48. The method of Claim 47, further comprising facilitating participant
2 association between particular active reel segments and a corresponding randomly-selected
3 expiration parameter.

1 49. The method of Claim 46, wherein identifying the randomly-selected
2 expiration parameter prior to presenting the symbols comprises automatically selecting the
3 randomly-selected expiration parameter without participant intervention.

1 50. The method of Claim 49, further comprising individually associating a
2 plurality of randomly-selected expiration parameters with a plurality of the active reel
3 segments.

1 51. The method of Claim 49, further comprising associating one randomly-
2 selected expiration parameter with a plurality of the active reel segments.

1 52. The method of Claim 29, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter
2 is a randomly-selected expiration decision performed each time that the symbols are to be
3 presented in each of the active reel segments.

1 53. The method of Claim 29, wherein the randomly-selected expiration parameter
2 comprises an expiration count and an expiration time duration.

1 54. The method of Claim 29, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols in each of
2 the active reel segments and deactivating the active reel segments that have expired until a
3 predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated comprises
4 repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments and deactivating the active
5 reel segments that have expired until all of the active reel segments have been deactivated.